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RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0531
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA 0453
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0516
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 2058
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0863
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE 0091
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 NOUAKCHOTT 000202

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [USAU](#) [LY](#) [MR](#)

SUBJECT: QADHAFI LEAVES MAURITANIA WORSE THAN HE FOUND IT

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 195

[1](#)B. NOUAKCHOTT 191

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Dennis Hankins for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Libyan leader Qadhafi's visit to Mauritania saw the President of the African Union pursue a mediation policy in direct opposition to the pro-democracy position of the international community he was ostensibly recommending. Qadhafi embraced the junta's plan for return to civilian (if not democratic) rule via June elections even as he chided Mauritania for being duped by western influence into trying a democratic experiment that was "inappropriate" for an Arab culture. The opposition forces -- both the President's FNDD movement and Ahmed Ould Daddah's RFD party -- have again found common ground against the military's agenda although Ould Daddah continues to oppose the return of President Abdallahi even as a transition authority. The regime will use Qadhafi's visit as evidence of international support while opposition forces -- who have said Qadhafi is no longer acceptable as a mediator -- will ask the international community to distance themselves from Qadhafi's statements. End Summary

48 Hours

[1](#)2. (C) Charge met March 12 with FNDD "Foreign Minister" Mohamed Ould Maouloud soon after Qadhafi had flown out of Nouakchott. Despite the swirl of activity of the past several days, Maouloud was relaxed and dismissed Qadhafi's mediation as an unfortunate distraction that the International Consultative Group on Mauritania (ICG-M) should have anticipated before giving the inherently undemocratic Libyan leader a mandate to same Mauritanian democracy (Comment: The French Charge suggested essentially the same thing to Charge saying "the February 20 meeting gave Qadhafi the mandate because everyone is tired of Mauritania -- nobody expected success). Maouloud recounted Qadhafi's undemocratic statements reported in REFTELS but told Charge, "we had hoped this was just his negotiating style and that he was being equally tough on everyone else." Maouloud said any hope of legitimate mediation was gone when Qadhafi called FNDD, RFD, and regime leaders together March 9 for a two hour meeting. Qadhafi ran into his litany that the democratic system is a method of western control over Africa imposing a system that is inappropriate for Africa. He noted that most of Africa's

leaders came to power through force which is the natural state of things. Now that Aziz has taken power, it is logical that he should keep it -- so FNDD calls for the return of President Abdallahi are "unrealistic." Qadhafi called for acceptance of the June 6 elections which he presumed would lead to the election of Aziz as a civilian leader adding "Aziz won't rule alone -- there will be space for you." The FNDD delegation (including Ould Maouloud, President of the National Assembly Messaoud Ould Boulkheir, and President of the Social and Economic Council Ahmed Ould Sidi Baba) dismissed the Guides approach saying they would not even start talks until the June 6 elections were scrapped. They argued that the only acceptable solution had to pass through the return of the elected President. Ahmed Ould Daddah also declared himself against the June elections or any elections organized by the regime, but stressed elections organized by of government of national unity without Abdallahi's return were the best route. Regime representatives told Qadhafi "we agree exactly with your position" while telling Ould Maouloud, "the time for dialogue is over -- that's what you did in Libya. This is the conclusion of that dialogue." The closed doors meeting was followed by Qadhafi's public speech when he told Mauritians to forget the past and look to the future after the June 6 elections. The FNDD delegation walked out with this public declaration in support of the junta's political plan.

13. (C) Qadhafi's envoy Medhani asked the FNDD leadership to meet with Qadhafi one more time the morning of March 12 but the FNDD refused saying there was nothing more to talk about. National Assembly President Ould Boulkheir was, however,

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authorized to meet as a "protocol requirement." According to Ould Maouloud, Ould Boulkheir told Qadhafi that he was no longer acceptable as a mediator. Qadhafi reportedly tried unsuccessfully to leave the door open for future engagement suggesting the FNDD had misinterpreted his statements. After still being rebuffed, Qadhafi made an unambiguous statement in support of the June 6 elections suggesting "the AU sanctions dossier is now closed because the military have committed to a return to civilian role."

14. (C) Ould Maouloud told Charge that President Abdallahi would be reaching out to the international community over the next week to reject Qadhafi's anti-democratic "mediation." Ould Maouloud was particularly interested in getting the AU's Commissioner Jean Ping to distance the AU from Qadhafi. The March 17 meeting of the African Union's Peace and Security Council under the chairmanship of Burkina Faso is seen as key in restating the AU's opposition to the coup.

Ahmed Ould Daddah -- the "French Guy"

15. (C) Following the FNDD's walkout, Ould Maouloud said he had met at length with Ahmed Ould Daddah to try to build a unified front against the regime. Ould Maouloud pushed hard to get Ould Daddah to support the FNDD position saying the President would: (a) create a government of national unity that would include Ould Daddah's people, (b) would immediately move towards early elections, and (c) would yield all executive power to the Prime Minister assuming an essentially symbolic role that nonetheless re-established constitutional legitimacy. Ould Maouloud argued this offered Ould Daddah the best chance of free and fair elections that might see him fulfill his dream of being elected -- something both of them knew would not happen under elections organized by the regime. When Ould Daddah persisted in saying he would not accept Abdallahi's return -- no matter how short and symbolic that return might be -- Ould Maouloud pushed on "Why not?" Ould Daddah replied "because the international community doesn't want Abdallahi back."

16. (C) Consistent with the FNDD's very skeptical view of French influence, Ould Maouloud told Charge that by saying

the "international community" Ould Daddah really meant "the French." Ould Maouloud said he is still convinced that the French (at least the French security services) had supported the coup probably out of concern over Abdallahi's Islamist tendencies. The theory continues that the French assumed the coup would be fast and unopposed leading to a military regime that would meet French security and commercial interests. Ould Maouloud suggested that now the French are against Abdallahi's return because "they are afraid they will be punished for their support of the coup" by a new government that will be increasingly pro-American. Ould Maouloud believes Ould Daddah is being spurred on by the French to oppose Abdallahi's return to ensure they don't lose influence. Charge responded that, contrary to what might be assumed, there is no French - American competition for influence in Mauritania. Despite Mission efforts before the coup, there is virtually no American commercial interest in Mauritania's oil and minerals -- a fact the French are well aware of.

Comment

17. (C) The colorful twists Qadhafi added to the political process were not unexpected but they leave the situation even more muddled. The regime will now certainly claim to have the support of the "international community's representative" while anti-coup forces need to reconstruct an international position of condemnation. While some international partners are likely to distance themselves from Qadhafi, not all will -- leading to an even more fractured international stance. The FNDD and Ould Daddah are again of common cause against the coup, but the underlying personalities (and, possibly, Ould Daddah's belief he can come out on top) continue to prevent a united front that can effectively counter the coup. European diplomatic partners from France and Spain were

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clearly upset with Qadhafi's mediation -- with the French Charge noting "he missed a historic moment as head of the UNSC and AU to show he could be a responsible world leader." The EC Representative was sure the European Commission would be quick to state that what Qadhafi did was not reflect the views of the international partners. The assumption remains that Aziz will go forward with his election plans and, in all likelihood, win those empty elections.
HANKINS